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# Curios and Relics

## Clothing Accessories

Canes Made from Rail Split  
by Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

THE INDIANAPOLIS SUNDAY STAR, FEBRUARY 12, 1933.

## CANE AND MALLETT MADE FROM RAIL BY LINCOLN



The cane and mallet held by Ira Haworth were made from a walnut rail in Illinois and brought into the convention hall at Chicago immediately after Abraham Lincoln was nominated for President in 1860. Lincoln obtained a piece of the rail and had these articles made for his friend, Ira Haworth, a member of the convention. Mr. Haworth was

born in Wayne county, Indiana, in 1827. His great-grandmother was a sister of John Adams, second President of the United States. On Mr. Haworth's death in 1912 at his home in Kansas City, his sister, Dr. Hannah M. Fisher, presented these relics to Lincoln Memorial university at Harrogate, Tenn. The picture of Mr. Haworth she presented to Mrs. J. E. McMullan of Huntington, Ind.

DONALD R. FERGUSON  
FURNITURE MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE  
201 WEST CENTRAL AVENUE  
LAGRANGE, INDIANA

September 12, 1955

Dr. Louis A. Warren  
Lincoln Life Insurance Co.  
Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Dear Dr. Warren:

I have a cane which Abraham Lincoln had made from one of the walnut rails he had split and this cane was given to my great grandfather, Brigadier General James Monroe Ruggles, who was a close friend and political associate of Lincoln. This cane has a place over the end for a tintype picture of Lincoln which fits over the end of the cane and I have this tintype which shows Lincoln as smooth faced. This cane is straight and is thirty seven and one half inches in length as Lincoln apparently thought of his own height when he had the cane made as my great grandfather was a short man.

This cane has been handed down in our family and since I do not have any heirs to leave it to, I thought that perhaps Lincoln Life might be interested in purchasing this cane for their Lincoln Museum and Collections. I have had information from the Illinois Historical Society that this particular cane is the only one in existence.

I will gladly show you this cane and discuss this matter with you if you would desire to.

I will be pleased to hear from you.

Very truly yours,

*Donald R. Ferguson*

CAME HOME FROM WIL

September 19, 1955

Mr. Donald R. Ferguson  
201 West Central Avenue  
LaGrange, Indiana

My dear Mr. Ferguson:

The cane which you describe seems very interesting indeed and if we were in a position to display such items I think we would be pleased to acquire it; however, we confine ourselves almost exclusively to books and pamphlets and information about Lincoln rather than curios. Thank you nevertheless for your thoughtfulness in advising us about it.

Very truly yours,

LAW:WMC

Director

8  
DONALD R. FERGUSON  
FURNITURE MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE  
201 WEST CENTRAL AVENUE  
LAGRANGE, INDIANA

June 1, 1957

Mr. R. Gerald McMurtry  
The Lincoln National Life Foundation  
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Mr. McMurtry:

Thank you kindly for your letter of May 29th in regard to the Lincoln cane about which I wrote to Dr. Louis A. Warren on Sept. 22, 1955.

Although I have had some offers to sell this cane, I have not done so as I am not too anxious to dispose of such a rare and valuable item. The State of Illinois has been particularly anxious to obtain the cane for their Lincoln Springfield Home. However, we have not completed any transaction.

In view of the fact that I have been unable to locate any other cane in existence and because of the unusual tintype photo of Lincoln that fits in the head of the cane, I am asking \$12,000 for it's ownership.

I would be pleased to hear from you.

Very truly yours,

*Donald R. Ferguson*

June 4, 1957

Mr. Donald R. Ferguson  
201 West Central Avenue  
Lagrange, Indiana

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

I have your letter of June 1 regarding the Lincoln cane which you have in your possession. I am sure that you must have a very interesting and valuable relic.

It would be impossible for me to consider the purchase of your cane at any ways near the price you are asking for it. While at Lincoln Memorial University where I was the director of the Department of Lincolniana I acquired five canes of which was once the property of Abraham Lincoln. Never did I realize that they had such a value. Of course the value which you place on your relic is indicative of the scarcity and value of relics associated with the 16th President.

Thanking you for your letter, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

RGM:dh

Director

3

DONALD R. FERGUSON  
FURNITURE MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE  
201 WEST CENTRAL AVENUE  
LAGRANGE, INDIANA

June 12, 1957

Mr. R. Gerald McMurtry  
The Lincoln National Life Foundation  
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Mr. McMurtry:

I wish to thank you for your letter of June 4th and although the Lincoln National Life Foundation apparently can not afford to purchase this cane, I do wish to point out that the cane is different from the canes Lincoln is supposed to have carried.

I think you might be interested in the attached excerpt from the Indianapolis Star of February 12, 1930. The Beulah Ruggles Ferguson mentioned in this article is my mother. Not only do I believe that you will find this article interesting but I also believe it will help you understand why I value the cane as I do. I do not know of any Lincoln relics comparable to my cane and tintype photo.

Cordially yours,

*Donald R Ferguson*

DONALD R. FERGUSON  
FURNITURE MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE  
201 WEST CENTRAL AVENUE  
LAGRANGE, INDIANA

The following article appeared in the Indianapolis Star  
February 12, 1930

"A unique Lincoln relic in the possession of Mrs. Beulah Ruggles Ferguson, 3951 N. Illinois St., is a cane bearing a tiny "tintype" picture of Abraham Lincoln at the top.

After his election to the presidency Mr. Lincoln had several of these canes made from walnut rails split by himself, polished and finished with the tintypes, as gifts to some of his personal friends.

The donor evidently thought of his own height in having the canes made, for this one is thirty-seven and a half inches in length, although the recipient in this case was rather a short man. The "tintype" portrait is smooth faced, a picture not so familiar as the later bearded ones.

This cane was given by Lincoln to Gen. James Monroe Ruggles of Bath, Ill., Mrs. Ferguson's grandfather, who was his friend and political coworker for many years. Gen. Ruggles was born in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1818, learned the printer's trade as a boy and worked on various newspapers, among them the Missouri Republican of St. Louis, at the time of the death of Lovejoy. In 1837 he went to Illinois where he studied and practiced law.

#### DELEGATE IN 1846

In 1846, Gen. Ruggles was a delegate to the convention that nominated Lincoln for Congress: in 1852, he was a state senator. He served on a committee with Lincoln to draft resolutions for the adoption of a party platform: in 1856, he and Mr. Lincoln were delegates to the first Republican convention. He was frequently Lincoln's companion in his speech-making trips during the campaign of 1858.

At the request of Governor Yates, Gen. Ruggles went in April, 1861, to Washington as the bearer of important dispatches to the President. It was difficult to get into the city at this time but he went first to Philadelphia, thence to Perryville, then by steamer to Annapolis, and from there to Washington. He arrived at the White House late at night and was warmly received by the President who was overjoyed to see his old friend. There he met several members of the Cabinet, and presented the dispatches from Governor Yates.

DONALD R. FERGUSON  
FURNITURE MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE  
201 WEST CENTRAL AVENUE  
LAGRANGE, INDIANA

At this time Mr. Lincoln offered his friend a political appointment, which he refused, as he had determined to enter the services. He enlisted from Illinois and continued in service throughout the war. As Col. Ruggles he was brevetted on March 20, 1866, a brigadier general.

PROOF OF HISTORY

As a special friend, he had been presented with one of the Lincoln canes. Some years ago, Mrs. Ferguson learned from the Illinois Historical Society that there is perhaps no other of these canes in existence. Canes had been shown whose owners claimed that they were the Lincoln canes, but no positive proof could be given. In this case the cane presented to Gen. Ruggles had been handed down to his son, Albert Gallatin Ruggles, and then to Mrs. Ferguson, who could thus furnish positive proof of it's history."

June 14, 1957

Mr. Donald R. Ferguson  
201 West Central Avenue  
Lagrange, Indiana

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

I was delighted to have your letter of June 12 giving me additional information concerning the Lincoln cane which you have in your possession.

I have read with interest the attached excerpt from the Indianapolis Star of February 12, 1930. Without question you must have a very unique and genuine relic.

In collecting Lincolniana it is necessary that I set up a policy regarding purchases. While the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company and its sponsor the Foundation do put considerable money into collecting materials we do not spend large amounts on relics. While we consider relics very fine additions to our collection we would prefer to place \$12,000 into manuscripts rather than relics. Manuscripts have a tendency to bring to our institution scholars and biographers who are doing extensive research on the life of Lincoln. I hope that you will understand our thinking along these lines.

Thanking you for your letter I remain,

Yours sincerely,

R.C.McMurtry:md

Director

DALE HOUGHTON  
157 EAST 18<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK

LINCOLN CANE

*Life Foundation*

Presented to the Lincoln National ~~Museum~~  
by Dale Houghton, Professor of Marketing,  
New York University and Vice-President of  
The Klein Institute for Aptitude Testing, Inc.

This cane was turned from a rail which Abraham Lincoln split. It was one of several rails carried in a Lincoln torch-light parade to dramatize Lincoln, the rail splitter. After the parade, the rails were turned into canes and given to Lincoln's friends and neighbors.

This particular cane, a family heirloom, was given to William T. Moffett, an ancestor of Professor Houghton's late wife, Dr. Allene Gregory Houghton, daughter of Dr. John Milton Gregory, President of the University of Illinois, and Professor Louisa Allen Gregory who, before her marriage, was Dean of Women and Professor of Home Economics of the University of Illinois.

The Moffett family, in 1841, settled along the banks of the Sangamon River about one-half mile from the home of Abraham Lincoln. William Moffett was a member of the Illinois State Legislature when Lincoln was President, and he knew him personally.

The cane eventually became a family heirloom following the marriage of Moffett's daughter into the Allen family at Decatur, Illinois, after the Civil War.

July 1957





